MIAMI PUBLIC MEETING

OCTOBER 9, 2003

JONNA POLK: Good evening. My name is Jonna Polk. I'm the project manager for the Tulsa District for the Tar Creek and Spring River Watershed Management Plan Development and I'd like to welcome you here on behalf of the Corps of Engineers. We're so glad that you came out and spent Thursday evening with us. We'll try to make this brief. But we really appreciate your attendance.

First of all, we'd like to recognize some folks that have come in this evening and are working with us, or we hope to work with in development of this plan. First of all that's, USEPA's represented here by Wren Stenger and Sing Chia. USGS is represented by Jim Wellman and Kelli DeHay. Department of Environmental Quality, Oklahoma, is Mary Jane Calvey and Dennis Datin. I'm sure you guys know them well. And then Grand Gateway Economic Development Authority, John Pryor. We'd also like to recognize Miami Tribe representative Tom Ward; Peoria Tribe, Jim Dixon; Quapaw Tribe, Tim Kent. And also the mayor of Miami, Harrell Post; and the mayor of North Miami, Julian Combs. Thanks so much for everybody being here this

evening.

The purpose of our meeting is to announce the plans for completion of the Watershed Management Plan by August 2004. We will be completing it October 2004. Our Colonel has made some very strong commitments on behalf of the Corps of Engineers, and we plan to keep those commitments. So you can look forward to issuance of that Watershed Management Plan in August of 2004.

We want to actively involve the community and the stakeholders. We've been in contact with several of the stakeholders directly and we want to continue that. We also want to continue to have these public meetings. We want to share information with you as the plan is developed, and we also want to seek your input as a plan is developed.

Our format this evening is both a formal presentation that we're holding right now -- Gene Lilly will make a presentation in a few minutes -- and then also we have an open house; some poster board set up outside if you'd like to talk about those afterwards. We'll be happy to answer any questions that you have. If anybody has comments, we'd like to welcome those at the end of the presentation. Just to make sure that everybody has time to ask questions, we'd like to limit them to three minutes. I don't think that will be too

much of a problem.

Afterwards, we will have that open house. We do have future meetings planned. It's very important for us to seek input. We also held the same public meeting -- or the same format Tuesday evening on October 7th in Picher. And the main purpose is just to get your input. So we want to continue to do that probably with follow-up meetings every two to three months.

Now I'd like to introduce Gene Lilly. He is the technical manager for this project.

GENE LILLY: Thank you, Jonna.

Most of you here are well aware of the issues that plague many people in the Tar Creek and Spring River watersheds. Many of these issues are related to past mining activities. Those activities provided the United States with lead at crucial times in our nation's history, but also contributed to issues that include health and safety effects, flooding, subsidence, water quality, mine shafts, mining waste, and American Indian concerns.

This is a watershed of many stakeholders. These issues affect folks living in Picher, Cardin, Miami, North Miami, Commerce, and Quapaw. These issues also impact important cultures of people from the

Eastern Shawnee, Miami, Modoc, Ottawa, Peoria, Quapaw, Seneca Cayuaga, Shawnee, and Wyandotte Tribes.

Recently released information indicates that there's potential watershed issues on the Neosho River near Miami. The epicenter of the mining took place in the Picher/Cardin area, but the impacts affect many others in the watershed.

During the last several years, numerous local, state, and federal technical experts have suggested that a comprehensive approach to address the watershed issues would be more cost effective than approaching each issue independently. Because of the multitude of issues that impact the Tar Creek and Spring River watersheds, a variety of technical experts will be required. No single governmental entity or agency has the expertise or the authorities provided by congress to address all the issues that we previously discussed.

In May, 2003, a memorandum of understanding was signed. And that was in an effort to respond to the need for a multifederal agency response. The memorandum of understanding was signed by senior leaders of the U.S. Department of Interior, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A portion of the memorandum reads: "This

MOU seeks to foster environmental improvement to ensure the protection of public health and to encourage sustained economic stability and future environmental recovery. This MOU is being entered into for the purposes of coordinating response, reclamation, and restoration activities under the various applicable statutes. The tribal, state, and local government officials and community members are encouraged to play an integral part in planning the short- and long-term solutions for the Tar Creek area." And that's out of the MOU.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' authority to respond to our contribution to the MOU is provided by the Grand Neosho River Basin, Oklahoma and Kansas Authority. However, we'll be focusing on the Tar Creek and Spring River watersheds.

One of the MOU tasks recommended for the Corps of Engineers is the development of a Watershed Management Plan for the Tar Creek and Spring River watersheds. To accomplish this task, we envision a planning process that consists of a reconnaissance phase and a feasibility phase, and contingent upon approvals, we would move into a feasibility phase with a holistic approach.

The goal of the reconnaissance phase -- And

that's the first arrow that's colored blue in this time line diagram. The purpose is to utilize a team approach to identify a favored preliminary Watershed Management Plan and several Watershed Management Plan alternatives. And we propose to do this using existing information and professional judgement.

We believe that using existing information and professional judgement during the reconnaissance phase is the most efficient and expedient way to begin the process. Subject to approvals, favored alternatives, along with several other promising alternatives, would undergo final comparison in a follow-on feasibility phase effort. And that's shown by that second arrow on the top.

So to summarize, the purpose of the Watershed Management Plan will be to provide holistic solutions to area problems that will serve as a framework for actions to be implemented by various federal agencies and other entities. Our goal is to complete the reconnaissance phase effort by August, 2004. There are a lot of excellent information that we will be able to use. It is likely, however, that as alternatives are developed, we will identify data gaps. Those data gaps will need to be addressed in a follow-on feasibility phase effort.

Now concurrent with the reconnaissance phase process and potentially the feasibility phase process, is some plans or project implementation activities. Activities that would be conducted by the State of Oklahoma or Oklahoma University or other entities would be done concurrent with this process, but we would be consistent and compatible and complement the proposed and ongoing construction activities by the State of Oklahoma, Oklahoma University, and others.

We anticipate that we will be able to gain information from those projects. For instance, safe handling techniques of mining waste, monitoring techniques, adaptive management techniques, and recent and reliable cost information. So those projects will be able to utilize the information to help us develop a Watershed Management Plan.

We believe that we can benefit in those projects as we collectively develop the Watershed Management Plan.

This is just a summary. The next several slides is a summary of our guiding principles, again, addressed to human health and safety needs, restore the watershed echo systems to an acceptable condition, identify and compare preliminary alternatives, and identify favored alternatives for feasibility level

development contingent on approvals.

We want to engage stakeholders and all interested groups, and this will be a multifederal, multistate, local, and tribal agency effort.

We are hopeful this plan will serve as the framework for future actions, and also it will be a flexible plan that's modified and refined as new information becomes available.

During the reconnaissance phase, we'll be going through a six-step planning process. And these are the six steps: Identify problems and opportunities, inventory and forecast conditions, steps three and four is to formulate and evaluate alternative plans, compare alternative plans, and then identify several promising alternatives. So we're at the very beginning of the process.

Step one, identify problems and opportunities. And some of the resources we can use in this process, for instance, technical report, stability problems associated with abandoned underground mines in a Picher field by Ken Luza.

There's other information that's been developed by most of the area tribes. This was a CD we got a couple of years ago. It's the environmental impact on tribal lands in northeast Oklahoma. If this

needs to be updated or if there's some new information, we'd appreciate getting that. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel. We have been around for a while and we have started to come up with a comprehensive list of problems and opportunities, but we need folks to help us make sure we're on the right track. We've identified the problems and opportunities. We're addressing the areas of concern that you feel need to be addressed.

So in this process, people are very important to confirm what we've started to develop as far as problems and opportunities and to help us update information. You know of more recent subsidence events maybe than we have information on from, for instance, the Ken Luza report. So we need that help and we need to know what your priorities are. We know certainly that children with high blood lead levels are the number one priority for many. But we'll want to start prioritizing these problems and opportunities.

So I don't think Barbara Collier is here tonight, but she always has asked me in past meetings to put some slides up that show some examples of maybe what can be done. So the next several slides are just a small example of what might be done in the area.

And the picture on the left is Tar Creek of

course. The picture on the right is High Ore Creek in Montana. And this was a project that was undertaken by the Bureau of Land Management, and it's somewhat similar to this specific location because there's mine tailings that were put in the watershed. They put mine tailings right in the stream. So that's not unlike Tar Creek.

And they went through a process for this breach of the stream where they removed the mine tailings and disposed of the mine tailings in a safe manner, recontoured the stream banks, and got the meandrous correct back in the stream. And then you can see the construction activity. And then they revegetated with native type vegetation. And it didn't take very long. There was some dramatic improvements quick. And we've got data on this that we're going to evaluate and look at. But as I understand, it's even got trout to return to this part of the stream that they restored.

I'm not suggesting it's going to be that easy, but there is technology and there's some possible ways to address in the long-term, and even the short-term, alternative ways to restore the ecosystems back to an acceptable condition.

This concludes my presentation. Again, we

appreciate you coming here and we'd like to answer your questions as you have them.

AUDIENCE: I know the EPA is getting ready to initiate a remedial investigation for the mine waste. How will this plan mesh with that? I mean, how will you and the EPA work together on that particular issue?

GENE LILLY: That's part of the process of this MOU. And our senior leadership have gotten together and the agencies will be working together. We don't want to reinvent the wheel of course. The mining waste is part of Operable Unit Four that's going to be addressed, and we want to complement that process where the agencies are working together. If there are some gaps in other parts of the watershed that may not be addressed by Operable Unit Four, this will be an opportunity to complement that work with other actions and activities that could potentially result in something from a watershed approach.

Does that answer your question?

Wren, did you have -- or Sing, did you-all have anything --

Earl?

EARL HATLEY: Now you talked about just briefly you mentioned Spring River and the Tar Creek

watershed. So I assume, from the Spring River, you're looking at the impacts from the Missouri, Kansas sites as well as Beaver Creek as it flows down.

GENE LILLY: Our district boundaries do not go into Missouri, but --

EARL HATLEY: But the contaminants come here, so you're going to be looking at that?

GENE LILLY: Right. We will be looking at the end result or location of the contaminants. Elm Creek, some of the tributaries need to be looked at. I think there are opportunities to coordinate and work with EPA Region Seven into Missouri.

EARL HATLEY: So I guess my real question is: How far down are you going to go? Are you going to go into the Grand Lake, which would be Wyandotte and Seneca Cayuaga jurisdictions, and look at the sediment impacts and the potential for floodplain and -- (inaudible) -- zone contamination as well?

GENE LILLY: At Grand Lake, or at the Spring River?

AUDIENCE: Well, their jurisdictions go into upper Grand Lake. So are you going to go down that far? You have their tribes mentioned up there.

GENE LILLY: We certainly want to look at the contaminants that go in that direction, you know, from

a watershed approach. Now where exactly we draw the line, I think that's going to be part of what we need to look at when we start this process.

AUDIENCE: Is there going to be coring of sediments in upper Grand Lake involved with this?

GENE LILLY: We're not really planning any during the reconnaissance phase. Now if USGS has any activities there, we certainly are going to utilize that information.

Jim or Kelli --

AUDIENCE: But really for the reconnaissance part of it, you're going to be gathering up all the data that we know now about the sediment contamination in Grand Lake. Correct?

GENE LILLY: That's correct.

AUDIENCE: So coring could come when you start construction in the remedial phase. Right?

GENE LILLY: Right. This phase here, we're proposing to use existing information and professional judgement, identify data gaps that then would be picked up during the feasibility phase effort.

Yes, ma'am?

AUDIENCE: Do I understand that you just have a certain area, and we have an area on top of us and one below us that are contaminated? How can you just

take one area in the middle and fix it? Don't you have to start at the beginning and go all the way through?

GENE LILLY: We do need to look at what's happening in Kansas, certainly, because that's potential contaminants coming down into Oklahoma. Our district boundaries do go into Kansas. We're in the Arkansas Basin. In Kansas, I think we need to coordinate with the Oklahoma Geological Survey counterpart in Kansas. The work that Ken Luza did, there was also a similar type of work done in Kansas and Missouri because of the tri-state area. So I think that's existing information we can use, along with professional judgement, to help us come up with a holistic approach.

Now that's an excellent point you bring up. I think during this reconnaissance phase that we'll be able to identify data gaps. So we may be, you know, looking at different things in a feasibility phase because we don't have all the gaps filled during this reconnaissance.

AUDIENCE: Well, it just makes no sense to fix the middle and leave the end contaminated, to me. It needs to all be done.

GENE LILLY: I agree with you. I think a

watershed approach is the right way.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

GENE LILLY: Any other questions?

JIM WELLMAN: I just want to add on to what Gene was saying, is that we are starting the study looking at the watershed, the Spring, Neosho, and Tar Creek, and we will provide that information to the Corps once it's completed or while we're collecting that data. So the USGS, with the cooperation of the DEQ, with funding from EPA, is kicking off this project, and we'll be starting at Spring River near Quapaw and downstream to the upper Grand Lake. So we are looking into that, and information will be available to the Corps and other entities. And it's a good question for watershed --

AUDIENCE: How can we keep contaminants from Kansas out? I mean, come on. We've got to fix it there too.

JIM WELLMAN: One of our goals is to identify sources of contamination, and so what the Corps or the remediation can put funds or their effort towards that particular watershed, whether it be Spring River, Neosho, or Tar Creek.

GENE LILLY: Thank you, Jim.

We hope that if you're at meetings you'll

begin to see things a little differently than what we have in the past, where in the past maybe the Corps of Engineers would just come and put on a public meeting. What we're hopeful for is that we'll begin to add all these agencies at these public meetings. And we're starting to get some tabletop displays. And what we want to demonstrate is that we are working together, and even though we're working on different activities, we're working towards a holistic approach and holistic solution, and that's our intent of starting to have these tabletop displays and to indicate we are working together.

Well, if there's no other questions, thank you very much. We are going to be here. We'll stay here as long as people want to visit. If you have some questions you didn't think of during the formal part of the meeting, please ask those, and Maria can give you some information on public input. She's our public information specialist here.

MARIA WEGNER: Okay. Since there's not a lot of questions, I'm just going to kind of give a quick rundown of public involvement. Along with the public meetings, we do have a web site that is being updated. A lot of the stuff is already up there, and if you have a pen I can tell you that site actually. It's

www.swt.usace.army.mil. Did everyone get it? Do I need to repeat it? Okay. If you go to that page and on the left column there is a little menu that says "Local Projects," and the Tar Creek and Spring River is right there. It's easy to find. And I'd welcome any comments you have on it, because for me to load it and look at it every day is a lot different than for the public, so -- And it's there for you guys, not for me to look at.

We also have comment forms available and there are plenty, so take several if you think you're going to think of something later, you know. I would be happy to get one every day or ten or twenty or however many you feel like mailing me. And there's also a paid envelope to make it really easy to return, with a stamp.

I'm also working on the public involvement plan, so if you don't like the way the format of the meeting is going or you wish for something else to happen, for us to come out to the community, just send me a note or mail us the comment form, whatever you want to do, call us.

And also there will be a newsletter starting shortly after this meeting. I'm going to go back and work on it. So if you signed up to be on the mailing

list, you'll be getting that in the next few weeks. If you didn't sign in or you didn't choose to be on the mailing list, just go back to the front where the sign-in sheets are and put your name down and your address; preferably print it so I can read it.

That's about all I have, unless you have some questions about the public involvement.

We also, as you can see, have a court reporter, and those comments, or a copy of the transcript will be available if you'd like it, so -- It will be on the web site as well.

GENE LILLY: That will be for both meetings.

MARIA WEGNER: Right. If you want to see what happened in Picher, the comments they made, the questions they asked, there's one for Tuesday night as well.

Did I get it all now? Sorry. I don't have any notes.

(END OF MEETING.)
